



BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL

Argo

SPECIAL VOLUME - EXTRACURRICULAR FAIR ISSUE

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Exclusive Extracurricular Fair Issue

Dear Readers,

Welcome back to your one and only school newspaper, *The Argo* (abridged version)! We're going to start the year with the usual News, Forum, A&E, Sports, and SciTech goodness. Like what you see? Turn to page 3 to learn how to join *The Argo*!

The Argo Staff

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL

Chicago Students Return to School

BY MIKE SKERRETT, II
& MARCELLA CARUSO, II
NEWS EDITOR & ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Schoolchildren of Chicago, our hearts go out to you. For seven days, your blissful summer has continued, allowing you to frolick, carefree in the summer breeze. Now all of that is over. With Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) officials having voted to end their weeklong strike and return to school, 350,000 Chicago Public School students are now headed back to class.

What started as a dispute over contracts and new regulations imposed on the teachers by the city of Chicago quickly turned into a national debate over the United States' public school system, leaving the nation divided over what exactly to do about teachers and students at underperforming schools. While campaigning in Ohio, a key swing state, Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney criticized the union, saying, "I choose to side with the parents and students depending on public schools to give them the skills to succeed." Romney went on to say that as president, his plan for educational reform would "do exactly that."

President Barack Obama has not weighed in on this controversial topic from his hometown, only releasing a statement through his press secretary Jay Carney saying that he "welcomes resolution to the dispute."

Rahm Emanuel called the end of the strike "an honest compromise," noting that the contract agreed upon was "in the best interest of students, who need

the best teachers." Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis said in a Q&A that the union realized that they "couldn't solve all the problems in the world with one contract" and that it was "time to suspend the strike."



CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS MARCH THROUGH THE CITY TO THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS HEADQUARTERS

The 232-page contract, published through the CTU website, outlines new rules mandating that 25 percent of teachers' evaluations be based on students' test scores, and introduces a new ranking system to teachers, where the city would have the ability to fire those on the lowest tier, "unsatisfactory," in 90 days should they fail to improve. A pilot study last year found that as many as 6,000 teachers could face layoffs under the city's original contract offer.

Many of those opposing the provision point out that the rules allow for

a mediocre teacher to remain at their barely-passing level of performance forever. The new proposal dictates that if layoffs should occur, the city could determine which teachers would go in part based on performance. The teachers at the

to continue.

While the strike in Chicago proved effective, gaining huge national coverage, that same kind of boycott might never happen in Boston, where teacher strikes are prohibited by law.

Nevertheless, the Boston Teachers Union has also spent a significant amount of time deliberating on its own issues, in talks as late as 2:30am. After twenty-seven months, the last session, on Wednesday, September 12, 2012, spanned eleven hours and a contract agreement was eventually reached. The decision regarded reducing class size, hiring additional school nurses, social workers, and replacement paraprofessionals, extending the school day, a fair salary increase and, like the Chicago Teachers Union, performance evaluations. Although this decision did not in any way affect the start of the Boston Public Schools school year, it was still an accomplishment.

Matthew Wilder, Director of Media Relations at Boston Public Schools commented on the recent negotiations via email: "Mayor Menino and Superintendent Johnson are pleased that this negotiation process resulted in a tentative agreement that ensures we can implement a new teacher evaluation system. Our great teachers deserve to be evaluated fairly and the families we serve deserve to know that everyone working in the school district will be held accountable."

Whether this strike changes anything in the long run for the public school system will remain to be seen, but for the hundreds of thousands of students around Chicago heading back to school, long days of learning await.

BY JACOB METZ-LERMAN, I
& ALICE XIAO, II
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR & NEWS EDITOR

It is that time again: presidential elections. People of the United States are once again deciding who their next president will be. As the Republican and Democratic candidates Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama are gearing up for election day, they are incessantly promoting their values and policies.

This election cycle, however, has not been without its fair share of controversies and political "gaffes," the most recent of which hit the airwaves this week in the form of a secretly recorded video of Romney speaking at a private fundraising event. Romney told his audience that "there are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the President no matter what. There are 47 percent who are with him, who are dependent on government, who believe that, that they are victims, who believe that government has the responsibility to care for them. Who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing."

Romney then continued by explaining that he "doesn't care" and can't do anything about this 47 percent because they will undoubtedly vote for Obama. Soon after the video was leaked, it went viral on the internet. This Monday, Romney held a press conference to clarify what he meant at the fundraiser. He did not recant his statement but did

admit that his words were not "elegantly stated." He explained that his remarks show a strong contrast between his vision and President Obama's vision. Romney said that his "free market approach" strongly differs from President Obama's "government-centered society."

Romney's remarks stirred up both strong support and strong criticism, as well as reactions in-between. As the video flooded the internet and the story made front page news across the country, we asked Boston Latin School students what they thought of the affair. Robbie Vadala (I) said, "I think he put a long-held, very conservative ideal blatantly out into

the open. Based on the platform he's running on, it was already clear that he thought along those lines. However, he said it in an extremely inconsiderate and politically incorrect way." Others, such as Nathan Winshall (I) and Will Byrne (II), felt that Romney's campaign may very well be "doomed."

Edward Wang (III) was skeptical of the accuracy of Romney's remarks. "47% is a bit of an exaggeration. That's pretty much saying that 1 out of every 2 people feel that they are victims and that the government has to take care of them."

Patrick Logue (I) supported this claim with stingy statistics. "Two-

thirds of that 47% pay tax roll, meaning they just don't make enough income to pay income tax, and the rest of that 47% are elderly or earn \$10,000 a year. Besides, the states that bring in the least revenue are red states."

Not all students, however, were so ardently opposed to Romney's stance. Michael Murray (I) told Argo reporters, "This is one of the things I agree with Romney on. I'd say that Romney was essentially planning a more efficient campaign. Why waste time going after that solid base of voters who have become dependent on the government assistance? I don't disagree with aiding those who need it, but under Obama the number of dependent citizens has grown, and that is definitely not a positive trend for the country. Romney's not just going to abandon 47% of the population if elected, but the objective of a presidential campaign and the objective of being president are two different things." Michael's view is not singular, as it represents the view of many who came out in favor of Romney's message. Some claim that while it may have been worded poorly, it still gets across an important message.

For those that think that Romney's campaign is "doomed," Robbie Griffin (I) has to offer, "Romney is hypocritical, but cunning. He can make an insult directed at his opponents that actually applies to his voters, and still get their votes."



MITT ROMNEY SPEAKS ABOUT THE SECRETLY TAPED VIDEO FROM ONE OF HIS FUNDRAISERS.

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Should Student Test Scores Affect Teacher Evaluation?



Con

By **ROBBIE VADALA, I**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In order to justify using students’ test scores in teachers’ evaluations, one has to make the faulty assumption that all students enter a given class with equal ability to learn that respective subject. However, there are many outside factors that interfere with students’ test scores, some of which are the fault of uncontrollable issues in the lives of students, others which are the due to flaws in our educational system, and still others which are the fault of students themselves.

According to Professor Donald C. Orlich of Washington State University, “parental income can account for 80% of the variance in college entry exams,” and has a similar effect on Washington’s local high school standardized testing. This factor alone almost completely places the blame for low test scores on the structure of our society rather than on our teachers. There is a plethora of personal issues which can interfere with a student’s ability to score well on standardized tests. Personally, I know many students who, despite their decent level of understanding of a given subject, do not score well on tests because of a lack of test-taking ability, and not because of some terrible teacher. Another reality that teachers have to deal with is other bad teachers. For example, students at BLS who might have had a bad Algebra 2 teacher will be far less prepared for precalculus, no matter how great their precalculus teacher might be.

Furthermore, many students walk into a given class with some kind of prejudice against something in the curriculum, the curriculum itself, or even our entire system of education. While I do believe that many such prejudices are justified, and that our educational system has deep, structural problems, I would not blame these prejudices and the effect they have in class on a given teacher. In fact, I have a friend who came to BLS hating science. She spends her time in Biology class doing other homework because she simply doesn’t see how Biology will benefit her in the future (she wants to be a writer). Could we blame her teacher if she were to take a standardized test and fail? Would that fairly reflect her Biology professor’s ability to teach? Certainly not. It would be unreasonable and would only punish her teacher for something beyond her teacher’s control.

Take the hypothetical vegetable situation: A talented chef is hired cook Brussels sprouts for a group of children who hate Brussels sprouts. Do you think those kids would be very open to the idea of eating the vegetables, despite the fact that they never liked them in the past? Do you think it is possible, nay, likely, that many kids would refuse to try the vegetables in the first place? By the same token, students who walk into a class they dislike rarely perform to their potential, and one can rarely blame individual teachers for a students’ preconception. Nor can one charge a teacher with the responsibility of making a student like a subject.

Over my years at BLS, I have come to understand how delicate the classroom environment can be; it only takes one or two bad apples to spoil the whole bunch, and a teacher who does not have to deal with such bad apples certainly has an advantage over one who does. One might argue that teachers at the same schools are teaching in similar environments. However, taking into account the previously mentioned outside factors, a sample size of less than 150 students is extremely unreliable, and there is far too great a margin of error to make any real conclusions. And besides, even if some kind of deduction about a teacher’s capability can be made from his or her students’ test scores, teaching to the test is one of the larger issues within our scholastic system today and does not require critical or analytical thinking. To base teachers’ evaluations on how well their students do on standardized tests only worsens this issue.

Pro

By **KATIE WANG, I & MICHAEL SITCAWICH, I**
FORUM EDITORS

In the recent strike of Chicago public school teachers, teachers walked out of their classrooms to protest a number of things, one of which was the controversial teacher evaluation system that incorporated student tests scores. Teachers feel that this new process, one that is a core part of President Obama’s education policy, is unfair because it disregards the outside influences that may cause students to do poorly on assessments, despite good instruction. This makes us wonder: what if student test scores were part of teacher evaluations at BLS?

Boston Latin School is the quintessential example of where standardized testing can accurately reflect a teacher’s competency. We were accepted into BLS on the basis of high test scores on the ISEE. Thus, it’s in the nature of us BLS students, almost to the point where it is intrinsically ingrained, to have the potential to score well on standardized tests.

This specific fact makes BLS ideal for a student performance-based teacher evaluation because it is a place where students can excel in spite of outside influences. If a correlation exists between a specific teacher and poor test results, it’s hard to dispute that those results are a consequence of anything but ineffective teaching. Our testing and learning capabilities were the determinants that led us to being accepted into BLS; therefore, bad test results among the majority of a teacher’s students clearly depict the fruitless results of that ineffective teacher.

Let’s take, for example, the pass rates of Advanced Placement classes. Because AP classes are supposed to prepare students for a standardized test, all AP teachers should instruct their students in a way that will effectively prepare them for this exam. The standards of these classes are the same nationwide so it is makes sense to evaluate teachers on the basis of student test performance. If one teacher’s class has a 90% pass rate, and another’s has a 30% pass rate, what can explain this difference if it isn’t directly related to the teachers’ abilities to be teachers? In instances where teachers are expected to instruct their students according to an established curriculum, student performances are very much a fair and valid way to evaluate teachers.

It’s no question that if a teacher is well liked and effective, that teacher’s students feel more compelled to learn in class. This increased willingness to learn is inevitably followed by higher test scores and higher achievement gains. When teachers put hard work into every day’s classes, we notice. It makes us want to do well. It makes us want to learn. It makes us want to achieve at higher levels – and we do.

We’ve had the privilege to learn from teachers who are extremely dedicated to teaching, teachers who come to school early and stay after 2:15 to answer students’ questions. Though teachers can be tough, we know that we are, in fact, learning many and new things from the class. Ultimately we perform well on assessments in classes we care about, and that largely depends on the teacher. Students want more good teachers who care; these are the teachers we expect.

If we can’t use students’ test scores and performance to evaluate teachers, then what can we use to determine whether a teacher is effective or not? Focusing on gains in student test scores by taking into consideration the fact that students start at different levels is completely reasonable. We’re not suggesting a totally inconsiderate and unstable method of ridding less qualified teachers only on the basis of exams. Rather, test scores will serve as one of the determinants in measuring teachers’ performances, much like how teachers must assess their students’ performances in class.

A huge national problem in America’s education systems still remains: inadequate educators in our schools. Analyzing gain from students’ test scores over the course of one year is part of the solution– it will make it clearer to discern the competent teachers from the unhelpful ones. This method has the potential to revolutionize America’s schools and raise the quality of education. Isn’t that what we all want?

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If you didn’t sign up at the Extracurricular Fair but would still like to contribute to the Argo, email one of our editors and join the Argo!

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Want to fix, and more importantly, snark at, illiteracy? • blsargo.ce@gmail.com

Want to shape the Argo into its current gleaming perfection? • blsargo.layout@gmail.com

Want to capture the special moments in time? • blsargo.photo@gmail.com

Or drop in on our first writer’s meeting on Tuesday, October 16th in 207 (Ms. Moon’s room). See you there!

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The Ball Keeps On Rollin'

By **MARK FAVORITO, I**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Soccer is a sport all about teamwork (despite the ridiculous talents of some individuals) and this idea of teamwork is emulated no better than with the Wolfpack. With a stacked line-up of many experienced players the Wolfpack begin this season with a feeling of confidence. This is the third year under Coach Jason Miller, a full time coach who really knows his stuff. With Miller on the squad he spends his time preaching the values of a Futsal style offense to his team. Like a giant squid his presence is felt immediately as he walks onto the pitch, and the long tentacles of his knowledge of the beautiful game will surely propel Wolfpack to a great year. Assisting this man amongst men is no other than Coaches David Bailey and Soorena Farboodmanesh. Bailey, an all-around cool guy, specializes in goalkeeping and played the position at University of Central Florida, basically he's D1 kids. Farboodmanesh, hailing from the beautiful nation of Iran, is a new American citizen, and perhaps one of the most emotional coaches this author has had the pleasure of knowing. This Persian powerhouse can be seen screaming his face off at horrible officiating, cracking jokes about the team, or cruising in his Mercedes. Along with these three phenomenal coaches, we also have the privilege of learning from JV Coach Andrei "The Brazilian Bad Boy" Da Silva, Coach Ben "Pikachu" Helfand, "the Master of Disaster" Coach Victor Martinez, and Goalie Coach Evan "Obi Wan Kenobi" Nelson. With a coaching staff like this Wolfpack is ready to make their charge up the DCL league table.

Leading the pack are experienced senior captains Jordan Freundlich (Midfielder), Cillian Clinton (Midfielder), and Mark "The Shark" Favorito (Defender). These captains present three different styles of leadership with Jordan being one of the most talented players on the pitch, Shark being one of the most intense, and Cillian being the most "Westie." Backing

up this three-pronged attack are some extremely talented players. Keeping the nets we have Pearse "Emily" Martin (3) and Nate Jewett-Wolf (3). On defense, the Wolfpack have a fortress comprised of Shark, "Big" Joe Petruzziello (1), Jake French (3), Nuri "Doyoumakeapost" Al-Hakim (1), and Griffin Burns (4). Along with wowing the female members of the audience Burns breaks the hearts of attackers as he tackles them with the aid of his trademark helmet of hair and dashing good looks. Holding down the middle of the pitch are the power couple, Owen Ward (2) and Alex Cassesso (2) who essentially control the game. The former is known for his ball skills, and the latter known for his "rippling" muscles. Though Wolfpack may already seem to be an unstoppable force they have talent to spare and other Varsity team members like Coleman Riordan (1), David "Rapid Dave" Gonzalez (1), and Cole "Slaw" Rainey-Slavick (2) contribute in every game. Luckily Fouad Baghdad (1) is around to help. This ball extraordinaire not only dangles, but also helps calm the rambunctious crew. He is an extraordinary motivator, and has become a dependable source of amusement for the team. On the JV squad there are rising stars that in a year's time will be ready to fill in the footsteps of the departing seniors. The Macintosh twins, Brendan and Michael (4), though small, dazzle defenders with their fancy footwork, while Caswell "The Ragin' Cajun" Ellis uses his swag to break ankles. With this much talent in one place it could be very difficult for a team to stay and work together.

Wolfpack began the season on a high note as they defeated their rivals CM 2-0 at their home field of Millennium



CAPTAIN JORDAN FREUNDLICH(I) SHOWING OFF HIS HEADER PROWESS

Park with goals by David Gonzalez(I) and Nuri Al-Hakim(I). After taking on and beating such a difficult adversary, Wolfpack seems to be on their way to a good season filled with goals, wins, and ambition. With the seniors looking to leave as legends, juniors looking to take over the

field and underclassmen wanting to make a name for themselves we're on our way to glory. "On the trot" they move on to the rest of their schedule with swords drawn. Wolfpack must stay strong, focused, and most importantly they must stay hungry. The Wolfpack is on the hunt.

Cruel Listening Experience

By **STEPHEN ZOULALIAN, I**
A&E EDITOR

I was robbed. Over five months of anticipation culminated in complete disappointment. Cruel Summer, Kanye West's new collaborative studio album, had so much potential. The first single, "Mercy," dropped all the way back in April. This Hip-Hop posse set the bar high for what the rest of the album would have to live up to. If this were any other artist, he could get away with releasing an album with a few good singles and no real direction. We live in a post-My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy-world, and it is no longer an option for Kanye West to release a studio album supported by four singles. Kanye's style has evolved drastically since the days of The College Dropout, but Cruel Summer is a step in the wrong direction.

The 12-track-cohesive-train wreck begins with "To the World" where Kanye West and R. Kelly explicitly explain why they are raising their "middle fingers up." The song is reminiscent of "All of the Lights" from MBDTF and is a solid start to the album. The next three songs, which were all previously released as singles, are the heavy hitters on Cruel Summer. "Clique" introduces the Getting Out Our Dreams (GOOD) music stars with a catchy and simplistic hook. "Mercy",

which has been stuck in our heads for months, is when we let down our guard and begin to warm up to the album. "New God Flow" is the song that makes us fall in love. Pusha T, Kanye West and Ghostface Killah deliver on this track, giving us my favorite rap song of the year. Everything from the sample of "Mighty Healthy" to Kanye's rhetorical questions at the end of his verses makes this song legendary. Suddenly we begin our steep descent down the discordant track list. "Higher" stands out immediately as the worst song on the album. Blood flows from my troubled ears when I try to listen to this autotune mess. The beat is good, but "The Dream's" autotune and forgettable verses make this song an automatic skip. "Sin City" makes use of Treyana Taylor, a GOOD music singer, and is an all-around good song. "The One," on the other hand, is Kanye's failed attempt at a soulful song, which results in another skip-able track. Some people will like "Creepers" just because of Kid Cudi, but this track is out-of-place and Cudi's weak lyrics do not help the cause. "Bliss" is a soothing song that is juxtaposed by the

enraging "Don't Like." And with that it's over.

We waited all that time for 12 songs. I wanted more out of Cruel Summer. It was supposed to be the rap album of the year. It's going to sell millions and the songs will be playing on my iPod for weeks to come, but this album does not feel like a Kanye album. Kanye takes chances. 808s and Heartbreaks was not an easy move for Kanye to make, but he did it and it worked. MBDTF worked. Watch the Throne had

the focus and enthusiasm that this album lacks. Cruel Summer is not bad. It's just not a Kanye-quality album. Immediately after listening to Cruel Summer I listened to MBDTF and was further pushed down into that pit of despair. Kanye should not have released all the good songs ahead of time, leaving us with a bunch of mediocre tracks. Cruel Summer will forever tarnish Kanye West's almost immaculate discography. The listening experience was disappointing.



KANYE WEST AND 2 CHAINZ